

## Poetry.

### KISSED HIS MOTHER.

She sat on the porch in the sunshine  
As I went down the street—  
A woman, whose hair was silver,  
But whose face was blossom sweet,  
Making me think of a garden,  
When in spite of the frost and snow  
Of bleak November weather,  
Late, fragrant lilies blow.

I heard a footstep behind me,  
And the sound of a merry laugh,  
And I knew the heart it came from  
Would be like a comforting staff  
In the time and the hour of trouble,  
Hopeful and brave and strong,  
One of the hearts to lean on,  
When we think all things are wrong.

I turned at the click of the gate-latch,  
And met his manly look ;  
A face like his gives me pleasure,  
Like the page of a pleasant book.  
It told of a steadfast purpose,  
Of a brave and daring will ;  
A face with a promise in it,  
That, God grant, the years fulfill.

He went up the pathway singing,  
I saw the woman's eyes  
Grow bright with a worldless welcome,  
As sunshine warms the skies.  
"Back again, sweetheart mother,"  
He cried, and bent to kiss  
The loving face that was uplifted  
For what some mothers miss.

That boy will do to depend on ;  
I hold that this is true—  
From lads in love with their mothers  
Our bravest heroes grew.  
Earth's grandest hearts have been loving hearts  
Since time and earth began ;  
And the boy who kisses his mother  
Is every inch a man.

—*Christian Intelligencer.*

## Contributions.

### OUR CHURCH PAPER—PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD CONTROL IT.

JACOB CASSEL.

It is not my purpose in this article to enter into conflict with the present Editor, nor to reflect in the least upon his predecessor. I have the highest personal regard for both of them. I believe that Brother Harrison did aim, and Brother Gnagey now aims to reflect the general sentiment of the church rather than to advance their own views ; if there is any fault to be found with the conduct of the paper in the past it must therefore be attributed to the sentiment back of the editors rather than to the editors ; it is however not even my purpose to reflect upon past sentiment, but rather try to suggest improvement in the future. The changes, or improvements of the present, do not necessarily reflect upon the conduct of the past.

It may be regarded pretentious, or even

presumptuous for one man to try to change the sentiment of an entire church, but as every change of thought is wrought by agitation some one must do the agitating if changes are to be wrought ; I am however conscious of the fact that churches as a rule do not seek changes, and only submit to them when forced upon them by external influence : internal agitation has always been regarded a crime in ecclesiastical law, but as the Brethren church is *progressive* and has very little, or no ecclesiastical law, I venture to suggest some improvement in the conduct of our church organ.

Briefly stated, I think our church paper should be open for honorable criticism of every action of every organization, conference, or committee of the church, and for the consideration or discussion of every phase of the Christian religion whether a part of the accepted doctrine of our church or not. Some may suppose such to be the case now but having tested the matter I know differently ; under the previous Editor I was informed that it was distasteful to the general sentiment of the church, to have the actions of Conference adversely criticised before there had been ample time to test them. By the present Editor I have been told that the discussion of certain Gospel doctrines were objectionable to the general sentiment of the church, both disclaimed ; personal objection, and I believe sincerely so. I have therefore (as already stated) no quarrel with the Editors.

It would be a hopeless task to undertake to harmonize sentiment on debatable questions, but individual and equal rights can scarcely be regarded debatable questions in a progressive Christian church. If our progression means anything it means that we have progressed from dictating *terms* of salvation to simply teaching and exemplifying the revealed will of God. This done, our responsibility and authority ceases. There is no salvation in obedience to any ecclesiastical law if it is not in harmony with the dictates of our conscience. While one may effectually pray for another, no one can exercise faith for another, and as faith is the great prerequisite to salvation, salvation resolves itself into an individual matter, and as all men have an equal right to salvation, we must allow the individual and equal rights of all men. When the sentiment of one man or set of men prohibits another man, or set of men from expressing his or their honest convictions upon any religious subject the rights of some one trampled upon, and the "golden rule" is violated.

The principle of individual and equal

rights is very prominent in every department of the Brethren church, except in the medium of intercourse with one another, our church paper. Why a "free rostrum" which was such an excellent thing in the German Baptist church is now so objectionable in the Brethren church, I have never been able to understand. Slander and bitter personalities should of course, not find place in a public journal, but exchange of views however diverse, can do no harm. If one has a truth or principle better than others, all should have the benefit of it. If one is in error he should be allowed to publish his views so that those who are wiser or better may have an opportunity to correct them. Truth will always stand before public criticism, and even if crushed for a time, it will come to the surface again, and error, even if it triumphs for a while, is just as sure to be brought low before the fire of an untrammelled press. I can see nothing to lose, and much to gain in a free interchange and comparison of views upon all moral and religious questions ; such as are too sensitive, or egotistic to gracefully submit to adverse criticism should never write for the public press. We are not born wise, but get all our knowledge of one another, and should therefore always be as ready to receive, as to impart knowledge. The bigotry of the average church-member is an almost intolerable quality to thinking men ; whether true or false every faith or belief we have, is because of the merest accident of environment—and yet nearly everyone considers him or herself a committee of one, to tell others what they must or must not say or do, when under precisely the same conditions we would be the same kind of characters we condemn or denounce. The Mohammedan would be a christian if he had never heard of anything else, and the christian a Mohammedan under similar conditions. Catholics are Catholics because they were rocked in Catholic cradles, and surrounded by Catholic influences all through life. A good, honest devoted Presbyterian would be just as good a "Dunkard" if "Dunkard" influences had surrounded him as Presbyterian influences did. Individuals join the Brethren church because they accidentally come in contact with it. A number of people living in the vicinity of Lenth and Dauphin streets, Philadelphia, have joined the Brethren church during the last few years because our church is located at the above place, if we had located at some other point, some of the people of another part of the city would be members of our church who know nothing about us as it is. We are all but creatures of circumstances or environments, and yet would